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SUBJECT: GLOBAL MIGRATION FORUM DECLARES ITSELF A SUCCESS

11. (U) Summary: The two-day Global Forum on Migration and Development was largely positive in tone, short on specific outcomes, and well on its way to becoming an annual event. Plenary sessions were dominated by states giving statements about their migration policy accomplishments and challenges, and many delegates said they found it useful to hear the experiences of other states. Peter Sutherland will stay on as the UNSYG's Special Representative for International Migration and Development at least until next year's Forum in Manila. End Summary.

#### Linking Migration and Development

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12. (U) The first Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) took place in Brussels July 10 and 11 with an estimated 700 participants from 155 countries. Although it is affiliated with the UN, the Forum was billed by organizers as an informal state-led process stemming from the UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development held last fall in New York. The Forum specifically sought to explore links between migration and development and the effects of each upon the other. It focused primarily on voluntary economic migrants, both legal and illegal, rather than on forced migrants such as refugees and trafficking victims. At its most basic, Forum participants said, migration affects development in sending countries positively through remittances sent home by migrants, and through increased human capital and exposure to new ideas gained by migrants. Negative effects of migration on development include the loss of highly-skilled workers in countries of origin (brain drain) and the social costs of long-term family separation. The Forum noted that receiving countries also experience positive development effects through the work of migrants and negative effects such as increased enforcement costs incurred combating illegal immigration. Reversing the equation, the Forum also explored the effects of development upon migration, saying sending countries need to consider how changes in agricultural, fiscal and other policies can spur migration, and to take migratory patterns into account when setting up national development plans. Developed countries noted that their policies can also affect migration, with the UK explaining its decision to stop recruiting doctors from some poor countries because of ethical concerns about brain drain.

13. (U) Because of the large number of Forum participants and the complex nature of both migration and development, the bulk of GFMD discussions were short on specifics and long on general statements. Each day of the two-day Forum was divided into plenary and roundtable sessions, with the roundtable discussions providing more opportunity to hear from experts and delve into subjects in greater depth. There were great disparities in the baseline knowledge of participants, who ranged from migration and development experts to representatives of ministries marginally

associated with either area. The global reach of the Forum also revealed that concerns about migration vary widely from region to region. Numerous Latin American countries noted that 20-30 percent of their populations live outside their country of origin, and that they are grappling with being migrant sending, receiving, and transit countries simultaneously. Many African countries, by contrast, said their primary migration concern is the high rate of rural-to-urban migration. Many developing countries said their main migration pattern is not South-to-North, but rather South-to-South as workers seek jobs in other neighboring and regional countries. (Organizers said they would post reports of the roundtable discussions on the Forum website, [www.gfmd-fmmd.org](http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org), on July 12. RefCoord will send detailed report of roundtables separately.)

#### Atmospherics

¶4. (SBU) The tone of the Forum was generally positive and consensus-oriented, with little finger-pointing or North-South polarization. Doubts about the Forum's effectiveness expressed before and during the conference, however, by the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, were not well-received by the organizers. During a roundtable discussion on the future of the Forum, both Regine De Clercq, Belgian Ambassador for Migration and Asylum Policy, and Peter Sutherland, the UN SYG's Special Representative for International Migration and Development, reacted sharply to questions and comments by the New Zealand delegate, saying New Zealand had not participated actively in Forum preparations and had no right to criticize it now. Delegates from Canada and Australia followed with comments similar to New Zealand's, but got no response from De Clercq and Sutherland (the U.S. did not participate formally in the GFMD, but sent an observer from USEU). Sutherland privately asked a Canadian delegate why the "Anglo" countries were ganging up to criticize the Forum. In the plenary sessions, De Clercq kept a tight hold over the discussion, once cutting off the microphone of a Namibian delegate who strayed from the topic. When an Algerian delegate noted that he would like to see more Africans chosen to chair roundtables and act as roundtable rapporteurs at the next Forum, De Clercq responded angrily, saying many African countries had been asked to participate more actively, but had refused. "I don't want to hear any more comments along these lines. I believe we should be praised and not criticized," she said.

#### Future of the Forum

¶5. (SBU) Germany suggested that the Forum take place every other year, and Thailand said it did not want to see the Forum become institutionalized, but Sutherland said it will be an annual event, rotating between countries of the North and South. "The show is on the road and the train is on the tracks and this thing is moving forward," he said. The process of choosing a host is ad hoc, he said, with the Government of Belgium offering to host the first one "with minor prodding," and the Philippines offering to host one in ¶2008. Sutherland said a northern country had stepped up to host the 2009 GFMD, but he would not name it. On the sidelines, contacts said that country is likely Greece, with rumors that Mexico would like to host the Forum after that. Sutherland said he would like the Forum to continue as an informal process led by states and outside of any formal UN structure, though affiliated with the UN to lend "legitimacy and universality" and to differentiate it from a conference. UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon, who spoke at the Forum's opening session, said that, at his request, Sutherland will stay on as the SRSG at least through the Manila forum. Sutherland said the GFMD will be run from now on in a troika format, like the EU, with the outgoing, current, and incoming host countries running it together.

¶6. (U) The Philippines outlined its proposed calendar as follows: From July 12 to Aug. 31 Belgium will transfer its files, website, and questionnaire responses to the

Philippines; on Sept. 1 the Philippines will send its first official e-mail to national focal points; on Oct. 1, the steering group will meet in Geneva to assess the Belgian-hosted Forum and identify themes for the Manila Forum; on Nov. 1, the Friends of the Forum will meet in Geneva. The Philippines said it is inclined to follow Sweden's suggestion that the roundtable topic dealing with links between migration and development be retained for the next forum, but that the other two roundtable topics be replaced with new ones. Austria suggested the link between climate change and migration as a possible topic. The Indian delegate called such a link "far-fetched." Sutherland and De Clercq closed the Forum by congratulating themselves and the participants for a "highly successful" event. Sutherland said that initial opposition from some countries had been "virtually overcome." "The big fear was that we couldn't have a constructive dialogue between the North and the South without criticism, but it hasn't come true," he said.

#### Comment

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17. (SBU) Most statements made during the two-day event were unobjectionable. The majority of states made boilerplate generalizations about the importance of making sure migrants are treated humanely and well, and noting the contributions that migrants make to both countries of origin and destination. The tone of the Forum was positive, and many delegates seemed pleased to be able to discuss migration concerns in a global forum and to share ideas and best practices among countries. There was little finger-pointing between developed and developing countries, and there was no real move to bring the Forum further into the formal UN bureaucracy. It was clearly a Forum for states, with state delegates getting the bulk of floor time during plenary sessions to make remarks and only short timeslots given to international organizations and civil society representatives. The Forum produced little in the way of concrete outcomes. It seems well on its way to becoming a permanent, annual event. In informal discussions with like-minded states, Canada said it had a generally positive impression of the Forum and would need to decide soon whether to engage more fully in preparations for the next Forum. A UK delegate said he believed the Forum was positive, though flawed, and that it made more sense to be a participating member than to be on the outside.

GRAY

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